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Joint Inspection Unit

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Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on some measures to improve overall performance of the United Nations system at the country level

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit for the consideration of the General Assembly his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Some measures. to improve overall performance of the United Nations system at the country level" (JIU/REP/2005/2).

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Summary

The Joint Inspection Unit report entitled "Some measures to improve overall performance of the United Nations system at the country level" (JIU/REP/2005/2) consists of two parts: part I provides a historical perspective on United Nations reform with a focus on operational activities, and part II addresses selected issues regarding operational activities of the United Nations system, especially in relation to performance at the country level.

Members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) generally find part I to be a useful and informative synopsis, presenting both a historical and a contemporary analysis of the existing arrangements within the United Nations system for operational activities at the country level.

As regards part II, the Inspector usefully reminds United Nations system organizations of the overriding importance of increasing the quality and efficiency of assistance to countries and of the need to reduce the transaction costs involved in the preparation of country-based diagnostic instruments. Members of CEB generally appreciate the performance issues raised in the report concerning coordination of operational activities at the country level. They note that the issues and the recommendations advanced in the report are, in general, covered by the General Assembly in the context of the 2004 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and in the provisions laid out in the Secretary-General's report to the Economic and Social Council on the management process for the implementation of the triennial comprehensive policy review (E/2005/58).

CEB members agree with the overall conclusion of the report and point to the need for enhancing the capacity of the United Nations for country-level diagnostics and for clarifying the roles of all relevant players. They highlight the importance of assessing the impact of country-level operational activities.

I. Introduction

1. The Joint Inspection Unit report entitled "Some measures to improve overall performance of the United Nations system at the country level" (JIU/REP/2005/2) consists of two parts. Part I reviews the history of United Nations reform with a special focus on operational activities at the country level. In part II the Joint Inspection Unit Inspector addresses various aspects of country-level coordination and formulates recommendations to improve perceived shortcomings, focusing on the following issues: (a) partnership for improved planning, analysis, programme implementation and results; (b) simplification and harmonization of procedures; (c) rationalizing field presence; (d) monitoring progress in operational activities; and (e) improving transparency.

II. Overall comments

2. The comments provided by members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) express appreciation for the analysis presented in the Joint Inspection Unit report, in particular the comprehensive historical perspectives provided in part I and the assessment of the challenges to the coordination of operational activities at the country level in part II. Members also welcome the review of current practices and processes leading to policy decisions on country-level programmes, as well as the review of coordinating and reporting mechanisms provided in the report. Some CEB members, however, note that the report does not adequately reflect the consultation process with United Nations organizations.

3. CEB members observe that a number of the issues addressed in the report, including steps to enhance system-wide policy coherence and operational effectiveness, are the subject of intense ongoing discussions among organizations of the system within the framework of the High Level Committee on Programmes. In addition, CEB members point out that General Assembly resolution 59/250, on the 2004 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, contains many of the same principles and policies as set forth in the Joint Inspection Unit report. For example, recommendations 2 and 3 of the Joint Inspection Unit report are covered in paragraphs 11, 46 and 59, respectively, of the resolution. The report also offers additional support for the implementation of the resolution as provided for in the report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council entitled "Management process for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 59/250 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system" (E/2005/58).

4. CEB members agree in principle that greater emphasis on inter-agency coordination at the policy level is indispensable for ensuring enhanced country-level effectiveness. The Joint Inspection Unit report is particularly useful in this context, providing a fairly comprehensive overview and inventory of the system's experience with operational activities at the country level. CEB members concur with the Inspector's view that, given the current status of intergovernmental discussions on some of these issues, efforts could be better focused on optimizing the efficiency of country-level operations.

5. CEB members note that the report emphasizes that Member States should increasingly be informed of inter-agency cooperation at the country level and consistency in decision-making, a trend that seems to be moving away from organizational reporting and performance assessment towards a stronger focus on reporting and accountability at the country level. CEB members agree with the general theme of the report — the desirability of a stronger field representation by United Nations system organizations with appropriate support mechanisms at their headquarters as one of the pillars of enhanced country-level coherence and coordination. They point out, however, that a number of system organizations are already moving in that direction.

6. In the view of CEB members, the analysis and most of the recommendations in the report do not take into account the significant differences between the core activities of the United Nations funds and programmes and those of the specialized agencies — one of the most important factors affecting coordination, simplification and harmonization at the country level — and, consequently, do not advance approaches that address these differences.

7. As regards specific findings of the report, CEB members note the following:

(a) The common notion of "comparative advantage", mentioned as the criterion for establishing distinctions between organizations' roles, may be misleading when dealing with organizations that cannot be compared because of (i) the disparities in the financial capacity of the United Nations system organizations vis-à-vis the Bretton Woods institutions; (ii) the technical expertise of the United Nations system organizations that can be matched by the Bretton Woods institutions through their financial assistance; and (iii) the essence of the United Nations system grant assistance, which differs from Bretton Woods institution loans and credits, which are part of the external debt of developing countries;[1]

(b) It is important to emphasize that poverty reduction is becoming the main force driving the reforms of United Nations development assistance. Members of CEB expect that in the coming years, the interface between poverty reduction, development and security on the one hand, and democracy, governance and poverty reduction on the other will become more prominent when assessing the effectiveness of development aid. Likewise, the roles and functions of the specialized agencies in contributing to poverty reduction and stimulating development will be increasingly featured in international debates — along with economic policies required to ensure sustainable and integrated development processes. Future United Nations system assistance and country-level operations will need to take these trends into account;[2]

(c) CEB members agree that the starting point of United Nations reform at the country level has to be a common coherent programme firmly grounded in national priorities and responding to national needs. They point out, however, that there is no agreement on what constitutes an "effective" development policy or how to gauge such a policy;[3]

(d) As regards the discussion on harmonization and similar administrative and financial issues, CEB members point out that, in many cases, extrabudgetary resources are not fungible among the different organizations of the system and are earmarked for precise purposes by donors. In addition, procurement or tender rules of some donors preclude the participation of United Nations system organizations;[4]

(e) It is pointed out that the following emerging trends in development cooperation are missing from those catalogued in the report: (i) the increasing concentration of untied aid and grant assistance in the areas of humanitarian, social and emergency operations, while economic and commercial needs are addressed through financial assistance and tied funds; (ii) the proliferation of NGOs competing with the United Nations system organizations at the country level, some affecting the overall United Nations system performance and image, while others are valuable partners of the United Nations system; (iii) the enlargement of the scope of World Bank technical cooperation in all areas of the economic and social agendas, while the United Nations system organizations are requested to focus on their expertise in humanitarian assistance and to limit their mandates according to currently available resources; and (iv) the shifting role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) from being the main funding source of the United Nations system to providing direct programme delivery in areas already covered by other United Nations system organizations. It is indicated that the latter merited more attention in the report, as it is crucial for the performance of the United Nations system as a whole at the country level;[5]

(f) CEB members note that the sections of the report on the simplification and harmonization of procedures and on rationalizing field presence do not take into consideration the situation of the non-resident agencies, in spite of the need to ensure their substantive participation in the United Nations country teams and the country plans;[6]

(g) Several members of CEB also expressed concern that conferring formal authority and accountability for the development and monitoring of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) results matrix to the resident coordinator might erode the authority of the respective organizations' governing boards and executive heads for programme orientation and implementation. Members note that the importance of individual organizations taking appropriate actions to implement their mandates should be taken into account.[7]

III. Comments on recommendations

Recommendation 1

The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to provide on the United Nations website (http://www.un.org) a full inventory of all the reform proposals of the United Nations system made to date. This could be part of the United Nations Intellectual History Project.

8. CEB members offered no specific comments on this recommendation.

Recommendation 2

The General Assembly should mandate the governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations (funds, programmes and specialized agencies) to consider measures aimed at fostering a culture of partnership, in particular through:

(a) Enhancing programme alignment with partner countries' priorities, systems and procedures, whenever possible;

(b) Engaging themselves proactively in the elaboration and implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) or equivalent processes, with a view to improving them further regarding a greater Millennium Development Goals focus, national ownership based on their comparative advantage and expertise, as well as on experience gained in the elaboration of United Nations instruments (such as Common Country Assessments (CCAs), United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and national reports on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals);

(c) Ensuring that all these processes complement each other, with the aim of reducing transaction costs, most importantly for the partner countries;

(d) Ensuring that where national development strategies are in place, the improvement of the analytical and operational quality of such national instruments should be made a priority.

9. CEB members note that fostering a culture of partnership for improved analysis, planning, programme implementation and results is already under way on a system-wide basis, including through the work of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Programme Group and the reviews of ways to improve the quality of CCAs and UNDAFs. The quality of CCAs and UNDAFs is now overseen by the regional directors of agencies working together at the country level and coordinated on a rotational basis by one of the agencies. Coherence with the PRSPs in each country is a key component of the quality assurance. In addition, concerned United Nations system organizations have agreed that where there is sufficient existing analysis through a PRSP, the CCA will not need to cover the same subjects. It should also be noted that through the work of its Programme Group, UNDG is fully committed to ensuring full cooperation with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Advisory Committee (OECD/DAC) recommendations and to ensuring that there is no impediment to the implementation of these recommendations.

Recommendation 3

The Secretary-General should task the resident coordinators and/or sectoral lead agencies to ensure close and active involvement of all the members of UNDG, including those with little or no field presence in the work of the United Nations country teams. Resident coordinators should also be instructed to draw on the accumulated analytical experience and knowledge of the regional commissions and other policy-oriented international, regional and subregional entities in the elaboration of CCAs and UNDAFs as well as PRSPs or equivalent processes.

10. CEB members agree in principle that the United Nations resident coordinator should ensure active collaboration with all organizations of the system that are engaged in country-level activities, particularly UNDG member organizations, including those not represented on the United Nations country teams. It is pointed out that the CCA was designed by an inter-agency process involving all members of

UNDG to reflect the broadest, yet most precise, analysis of a country situation from a United Nations perspective. Members note that regional directors at the country level, as active members in the process of quality assurance for the preparation by United Nations country teams of the CCAs and UNDAFs, do actively solicit the views and contributions of non-resident agencies at the country and regional levels, and are reaching out to the regional commissions to ensure their collaboration and participation in this process. It is underlined that UNDAF is by definition a national process and that transboundary issues are included in the UNDAF if deemed necessary by the national authorities. Moreover, they observe that many organizations of the system call upon their staff to enhance, coordinate, cooperate on and undertake joint actions with other concerned organizations of the system whenever possible. CEB members also underscore that the participation of non-resident organizations in the United Nations country teams does not require the same intensity in all countries, but rather calls for a modulated presence according to the volume and complexity of the operations and the national authorities' needs. This latter comment also applies to recommendation 4 below.

Recommendation 4

The General Assembly should request the United Nations system organizations (as represented in CEB) to consider ways to achieve over time a "single core country analysis" as well as a "single comprehensive implementation plan" with partner countries. This single core country analysis, which would consolidate the various country analyses and programme frameworks developed by each organization with the partner countries as well as those of the members of OECD/DAC, would cover all aspects of development and guide subsequent actions of the international development community (bilateral, multilateral and regional), based on respective comparative advantage. Because it would be nationally owned, it would also in the future ideally guide the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. This single core country analysis would inform the national development/poverty reduction strategy. Furthermore, in adopting a comprehensive development approach the international development community should aim, over time, at elaborating a single comprehensive implementation plan (business plan with results matrix) with the partner country, which would be based on this single core analysis and the national development/poverty reduction strategy of the country. This should allow for a division of labour among the greatest number of external assistance providers in a given country, based on recognized comparative advantage. Such an approach should ensure predictability, transparency and accountability. At all stages, the international development community should invest in the appropriate capacity-building (such as for analysis, policymaking and implementation), so that ownership can indeed be exercised by the partner countries.

11. CEB members suggest that this recommendation should be re-examined and clarified. Firstly, calling for a "single core country analysis" and a "single comprehensive implementation plan" is difficult to reconcile, in particular with the repeated references to "high transaction costs" involved in the preparations of country-level diagnostic instruments and the cogent observation in paragraph 65 of

the report that the dangerous tendency in administrations is to let the processes become the results. Secondly, it is argued that reduced transaction costs would be achieved by a more strategic focus of UNDAF and its results matrix, which would provide not only a plan for the United Nations country team, but also an accountability instrument linked to national development processes, including PRSPs where they exist. Thirdly, a single core country analysis and a single comprehensive implementation plan may be put in place only insofar as the financial resources of each organization allow for country-specific activities. In the case where country-specific projects are implemented within thematic programmes, as in a number of the organizations of the system, a restructuring of the financing along country-specific schemes would imply a delicate negotiating process with Member States, as the voluntary contributions that finance most technical cooperation components are allocated according to thematic areas. Fourthly, while recognizing that country-specific approaches are technically correct from the point of view of the effectiveness of the assistance, these approaches may lead to further earmarking of the voluntary contributions in favour of a particular group of countries — leaving aside others. In some organizations of the system, this may generate increased tensions among Member States, affecting the consensus-building functions of the organization and its overall performance. Fifthly, rather than pursuing country-specific approaches, it could be more effective to increase national and regional funds available for development assistance at the country level, and to enlarge the capacity of the resident coordinator/resident representative to allocate these funds to organizations that cannot finance country operations with their own resources, as occurs in many cases. Rather than expecting adjustments of the financing mechanisms at the level of the organizations, the country-specific plans should rely on resources already allocated to the country. Sixthly, CEB members wish to emphasize that a single core country analysis might run the risk of severely limiting what might realistically be agreed upon, to the extent of possibly excluding concerns well reflected in the mandates of the specialized agencies and their respective constituencies. Finally, CEB members point out that the General Assembly has already noted the potential of the UNDAF and its results matrix as the collective, coherent and integrated programming framework for the operations of the United Nations development system at the country level (resolution 59/250, para. 50).

12. CEB members are of the view that United Nations system organizations could come together around a common statement of goals to be achieved in a country. The organizations of the system could conceivably comply with a single comprehensive implementation plan, but then each organization would be responsible for its own implementation plan, the results of which are examined and discussed at higher policy levels. It is suggested that this could be an appropriate model for creating opportunities for joint work and partnership arrangements that would avoid turning expected results into endless processes.

13. In addition, CEB members wish to emphasize that a single core country analysis might run the risk of severely limiting what might realistically be agreed upon, to the extent of possibly excluding concerns well reflected in the mandates of the specialized agencies and their respective constituencies.

Recommendation 5

All executive heads of United Nations system organizations (as represented in CEB) should issue a strong joint statement tasking their respective staff to enhance "cooperation, collaboration and coordination, including through the greater harmonization of strategic frameworks, instruments, modalities and partnership arrangements", and stating their intention to reward them for this effort:

(a) Staff would also be called upon to proactively identify possibilities for joint initiatives within and outside CEB membership, with a view to increasing efficiency in programming for, and the implementation of, national development/poverty reduction strategies and the Millennium Development Goals;

(b) The identification of opportunities to work together and of new partnership arrangements should be encouraged by the implementation of appropriate incentive and reward measures (comparable across all United Nations system organizations). Individual and team performance assessments should reflect this increased attention to a culture of partnership for better results;

(c) All resident coordinators should in their annual reports inform CEB and UNDG of the United Nations country teams' responses to allow for appropriate discussion;

(d) Executive heads should report on responses received from their staff to their respective governing bodies;

(e) CEB and UNDG, as appropriate, should report to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly on the results of the above-mentioned joint statement. This would allow Member States to monitor progress and to observe greater coherence in subsequent decision-making on the matter.

14. CEB members note that the gist of this recommendation is already being implemented by organizations, as part of the ongoing reform process across the United Nations system. CEB has already adopted a number of decisions calling for greater coherence and coordination at the country level, and a number of directives have already been sent out to United Nations country teams on this. The response received from the country teams has been very positive. However, CEB members consider this an ongoing process, and some of them have included "building partnerships" as an element for senior managerial competencies and have instituted special awards for individual and team performance.

Recommendation 6

Executive heads of United Nations system organizations should identify and increase common training opportunities and make optimal use of the United Nations System Staff College:

(a) Executive heads should direct their respective human resources management units to increase common training opportunities, with a view to enhancing understanding of the diverse programming approaches and management-for-results cultures as well as other subject matters, with a

particular emphasis on issues related to the development work of the United Nations system. This should allow the identification of possible further joint initiatives in areas such as analysis, programming and implementation, but also simplification, harmonization and alignment, all of which are essential to enhance aid efficiency;

(b) Training opportunities offered by the United Nations System Staff College in Turin, Italy, should be better utilized and should be open to representatives of bilateral aid agencies, the European Commission and representatives of the international financial institutions, as well as policymakers of developed and developing countries.

15. It is noted that this recommendation is already being implemented, in different ways, by the organizations of the system. Members of CEB support the efforts of the United Nations System Staff College in systematically providing training on the newly harmonized country programming processes, including for CCA and UNDAF preparation, as well as in the areas of emergency preparedness, field security, prevention of harassment and other subjects. They furthermore underscore the importance of learning from the actual process of providing common training. For instance, recent inter-agency training on CCA/UNDAF piloted by the Staff College has shown that it is essential to take into account the specificities of each agency before developing inter-agency training programmes.

16. CEB members have supported the institution of the Senior Management Network and have asked the United Nations System Staff College to develop a programme to implement it. They further note the actions taken by the United Nations system to strengthen the capacity of the Staff College in this regard and to develop further joint initiatives in areas such as analysis, programming and implementation as well as simplification, harmonization and alignment. CEB members observe that in addition to the programmes at the Staff College, many joint training activities by the organizations of the system already take place at the country level.

17. Finally, on the broader question of increasing common training opportunities, CEB members note that the system has moved well ahead of this recommendation and is committed to using the Staff College to promote a system-wide learning culture rooted in shared values and common objectives for all staff of the United Nations system.

Recommendation 7

Governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should task the respective secretariats with speeding up the identification of obstacles to staff mobility within the United Nations system, and elaborate and report back on solutions, in response to General Assembly resolution 59/266, part VIII, "Mobility".

18. This issue has been on the active agenda of the system for quite some time. The subject of inter-agency mobility is both complex and complicated. Earlier this year a draft inter-agency mobility accord to replace the current inter-agency agreement for loans, transfers and secondment of staff was finalized under the aegis of the High Level Committee on Management. CEB members note that this new accord reflects the recognition that mobility is critical for strengthening both the

cohesiveness and the effectiveness of the United Nations system's response to global challenges and for building a pool of competent, versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil servants. The new accord is expected to facilitate open dialogue and consultation among all parties concerned. The final version of the new inter-agency accord was again reviewed in October 2005 by the High Level Committee on Management, which approved it for immediate issuance by the system. The fall 2005 session of CEB also endorsed the accord. CEB members appreciate the report, but note that the system has already moved well ahead of the recommendation.

19. They also note the work that has already been accomplished by organizations of the system in the establishment of local expatriate spouses associations in field duty stations, which is expected to contribute towards strengthening the organizations' ability to recruit, reassign and especially retain the best-qualified individuals, particularly women, through the tackling of issues related to employment opportunities for United Nations expatriate spouses.

Recommendation 8

CEB, in cooperation with the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), as appropriate, should formulate an appropriate incentive system for mobility which would build a basis for establishing a future United Nations system-wide career path, and report thereon to the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in 2007, and also in the context of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

20. CEB members recall that ICSC established a Working Group, with the active participation of system organizations, to develop various options for compensating staff for service in hardship duty stations and for encouraging mobility. In its report to ICSC, the Working Group noted the difficulties reported by organizations with regard to reassigning senior staff to the field, in particular those who had already completed several assignments. The scheme currently in place does not provide additional compensation for assignments beyond a fifth move. The Working Group therefore considered the establishment of groupings that would allow for the provision of incentives for mobility beyond a fifth assignment. The Working Group proposed that incentives be paid in respect of groupings of two to three, four to six and seven or more moves. The proposal of the Working Group was adopted by the Commission at its recently concluded sixty-first session and is contained in the report of the Commission to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.

Recommendation 9

The executive heads of UNDG organizations should explore the feasibility of further delegating authority to their field representation and improving simplification and harmonization within the system in the areas described in paragraphs 60 to 62.[8] Authority would be delegated to field representatives in line with the approach adopted by the four UNDG Executive Committee members (UNDP, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Food Programme (WFP)) with a view to removing structural or other

impediments to enable them to engage in more joint initiatives and partnerships with other organizations on the ground.

21. While this recommendation is addressed to the executive heads of UNDG organizations, CEB members note that the issue of country-level simplification and harmonization has been the subject of decisions by CEB itself. This has resulted in directives to country teams, as also discussed in the context of recommendation 8. As for the issue of delegation of authority to the country representatives, it has been pursued by all organizations present at the country level with a view to enhancing the flexibility of country programmes and the ability of the system to respond rapidly to emerging needs at the country level. Further work in the system is ongoing to ascertain the feasibility of delegating additional authority to field representatives, and improving simplification and harmonization in such areas as the authority to commit and spend programme-related budgets, engaging in joint initiatives and adopting a common methodology for calculating indirect costs. As for the authority to engage local actors in partnerships, CEB members note that this practice is already followed by their organizations.

Recommendation 10

The General Assembly should invite the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations working in development to strengthen and formalize their links with OECD/DAC, with the UNDG Office playing an appropriate role. To that effect they should extend a standing invitation to the DAC Chairman or his/her representative to attend all relevant meetings. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should do likewise. This would ensure better information exchange and, ultimately, consistency in decision-making.

22. CEB members note that UNDG has approved an action plan as a follow-up to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. It is further noted that a communication on the OECD/DAC process has been sent to United Nations country teams concerning the action plan, urging the resident coordinators and country teams to take specific action on the action plan.

Recommendation 11

The executive heads of UNDG should report annually to their governing bodies on progress made in advancing the simplification, harmonization and alignment agenda:

(a) In response to the commitments made in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), the reports would also indicate where organizations have been able to join the improved working arrangements of the four pioneering UNDG Executive Committee members and when and in which areas they intend to join them, or to elaborate on the obstacles which prevent them from so doing;

(b) The Economic and Social Council secretariat, in coordination with CEB and/or UNDG as appropriate, would provide annually to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly a succinct report on progress made, to complement the reports made annually to the Economic and Social Council by the four Executive Committee members.

23. CEB members observe that recommendation 11, as well as recommendation 17, focuses on the interaction of UNDG member organizations with their respective governing bodies and the General Assembly on United Nations reform issues. On the basis of recent experience in the annual session of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board and the operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council, the current interaction between UNDG, the UNDG governing bodies and the General Assembly may not be conducive to smooth, coordinated and continuous progress for the simplification, harmonization and alignment agenda.

24. As it is envisaged that UNDG will be reporting to the task force on operational activities proposed in recommendation 17 through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Group Office three times a year (and to the Economic and Social Council once a year), it is considered redundant for the executive heads to also have to report to their respective governing bodies on the advancement of the simplification, harmonization and alignment agenda. It is pointed out, however, that the Executive Committee members are already reporting to their governing bodies on progress made in this regard on an annual basis.

Recommendation 12

The General Assembly should de-link the functions of the resident coordinator and the resident representative of UNDP and change the designation process of the resident coordinator as explained in paragraph 86.[8] This would allow the resident coordinator to discharge fully his/her responsibilities and to establish a clear line of accountability to the entire United Nations development system, thereby ensuring full ownership of the resident coordinators by all United Nations system organizations. The Guidelines on the Functioning of the Resident Coordinator System should be amended accordingly.

25. CEB members note that the General Assembly has underscored that the management of the resident coordinator system continues to be firmly anchored in UNDP and request that UNDP appoint a country director to run its core activities, including fund-raising, in countries with large programmes or with complex coordination situations, so as to ensure that the resident coordinator is fully available for his/her tasks (see General Assembly resolution 59/250, para. 60).

26. It is noted that there already exists an agreement in CEB that the functions of the resident coordinator be de-linked from those of the UNDP resident representative. In doing so the system is expanding the designation of resident coordinators to a greater pool of candidates. This is especially important in situations where there is a large humanitarian assistance programme, requiring the presence of a humanitarian coordinator.

27. CEB members question why the responsibility for recommending future resident coordinators should be limited to the four Executive Committee members (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP) and exclude other CEB members, especially those with a large field presence, which are to be consulted only by the Secretary-General. It is felt that this arrangement weakens the initial argument for separating the two functions. CEB members are furthermore of the view that the initiative of the UNDP Administrator to appoint UNDP country directors is generally not sufficient to clearly distinguish the roles and responsibilities of the resident coordinator from that of the UNDP resident representative whenever both

designations apply to the same person. In order to enable the resident coordinator to function as an advocate for the mandates of all United Nations organizations, the proposal is put forward that he/she should be selected from an organization with no sector-specific mandate. However, it is also suggested that merely changing the institutional affiliation of the resident coordinator would not automatically lead to changes in the perception of bias and could, at worst, weaken the capacity of the resident coordinator to raise funds for the whole United Nations country team.

Recommendation 13

UNDG organizations should include in the performance appraisal system for the resident coordinator and United Nations country team an assessment of teamwork and horizontal cooperation. Best practices in working together and enhanced teamwork should be reported back to the respective governing bodies and be rewarded. These incentive measures should be harmonized throughout the United Nations system.

28. CEB members note that the Executive Committee agencies are forging an agreement on common responsibilities and authorities for the resident coordinator that will be accompanied by agreements on procedures for a common assessment of the performance of resident coordinators by all members of the United Nations country teams. These measures are intended to help ensure that resident coordinators exercise oversight of the design and implementation of UNDAF in a fully participatory manner.

Recommendation 14

The governing bodies of UNDG organizations should invite the respective executive heads to undertake a review of the grade structure and skills profile of their field representatives and other staff, and report thereon also to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council:

(a) The review of the grade structure of field representatives should take into account their responsibilities and accountability with a view to facilitating cooperation among United Nations country team members and to ensure consistency across the United Nations system. Grades of the respective representatives should be lower than the grade of the resident coordinator, who should have the authority (linked to grade) to lead the team. Such alignment should be achieved over time and also take into account country specificity. The governing bodies concerned should be kept informed about outcomes;

(b) The skills profile of field staff and the United Nations country team as a whole should meet the specific development needs of the partner country, in line with the comparative advantage of the respective organization.

29. While the intention behind this recommendation is appreciated, doubts are expressed by CEB members as to whether the proposed review of grade structures and skills profiles by executive heads of their field representatives and other staff will lead to the alignment of grade structures as envisaged in the report. It is deemed

likely that the UNDG member organization will find its current staffing situation appropriate, or at most needing only some minor adjustments.

30. CEB members note the proposal that the resident coordinator have a grade as high as or higher than other agency representatives in the field. However, while this may appear to be a reasonable approach, it may not always be feasible. CEB members are of the view that the organizations should retain the right to grade their representatives as they see fit.

Recommendation 15

CEB should submit to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council the list of countries where it would be desirable, in programmatic and operational terms, to establish a joint United Nations office:

(a) The review recommended in paragraph 100,[8] to be conducted in accordance with paragraph 120 of the Secretary-General's report A/57/387, would provide information on whether savings could be realized, and if so, how much, for the benefit of programming funds in a given country. A country so identified should be consulted on whether in principle a joint office would be acceptable;

(b) CEB would report on the results of these consultations to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in the context of the follow-up to the Secretary-General's reform and the triennial comprehensive policy review;

(c) The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should ensure that that report, with comments and/or recommendations, is made available to the governing bodies of all concerned United Nations system organizations for appropriate decision-making and action.

31. Members of CEB note that while the idea of common United Nations system premises may be justified in a number of countries from the standpoint of reducing overall costs, there are many potential factors, depending on country situations and the types of offices concerned (e.g., regional offices), that could complicate the realization of this recommendation. Moreover, because of the diversity of organizations' core activities, programmes and mandates, the reduction in overall operating costs is likely to disproportionately favour organizations with field programmes. Given the administrative, technical and political difficulties foreseen in the identification of possible pilot countries for joint offices, the members of CEB are of the opinion that the pursuit of this recommendation may not prove to be productive or helpful.

Recommendation 16

The governing bodies of UNDG organizations should task the respective executive heads with examining ways to further rationalize their field presence. This review would take into account the models used by bilateral agencies in the form of delegated cooperation, and lessons learned from pilot projects, such as the UNDP-United Nations Industrial Development Organization partnership, with a view to reducing transaction costs, and the results of the review should be reported to them,

it being understood that savings in transaction costs would increase available funds for programming for that particular country. UNDG should inform the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council of the outcome of the review.

32. It is pointed out that, indeed, the changing environment for aid delivery and corresponding aid implementation modalities call for a review. CEB members remain doubtful, however, about the automaticity of a reduction in transaction costs and point out that different country situations demand different flexible approaches. They believe that this issue needs to be pursued further on the basis of experience gained in close collaboration with the countries concerned.

Recommendation 17

The General Assembly should establish at its sixtieth session a "task force on operational activities" to oversee, support and monitor developments in operational activities as identified by triennial comprehensive policy reviews. This task force on operational activities should be established on an experimental basis for two years, initially, to coincide with the triennial comprehensive policy review cycle. As to the composition of this task force, its mandate and its working methods, refer to paragraphs 109-111.[8] Such a task force would enable Member States to be better acquainted with inter-agency work during off-sessions, foster dialogue, accountability and transparency and allow for informed and consistent decision-making.

33. Members of CEB are not quite clear about the merit of this recommendation. While it could be useful to further develop the terms of reference for the recommended task force, to clarify its role and added value, they are concerned about the real impact of creating yet another body in the already overstretched platforms for coordination. Furthermore, it is contended that the establishment of such a task force would lead to a weakening of the role of the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee of the General Assembly in the governance of operational activities for development of the United Nations. (For additional comments, see also the views provided under recommendation 11 above.)

Recommendation 18

The General Assembly should request UNDG organizations to instruct each resident coordinator to set up, in cooperation with the partner countries, an in-country public website with comprehensive information on donor support and United Nations system presence. To this effect, and with a view to increasing transparency, accountability and predictability for the benefit of Member States, resident coordinators should:

(a) Assist partner countries in mapping overall donor support in their countries, drawing on the existing DAC database, and complementing it with information on additional sources of funding, such as those provided by NGOs and the private sector;

(b) Gather information on United Nations field operations and system presence (structure, grades, skills profiles, nationality, etc.) in

programme countries, along with any other relevant programme information, e.g., the category of expenditure, type of assistance and location.

34. CEB members agree that sharing information on the United Nations system at the field level is of utmost importance and note that in-country websites have already been set up in many countries and yet more are being developed. Such websites are intended to enhance the exchange of information and interaction of the organizations of the United Nations system and would at the same time serve as an information portal to the public at large and to the international community. However, care would need to be exercised in ensuring that these websites remain manageable. CEB members also point out that clarity should be sought as regards the issue of ownership, governance, source, content, accuracy and validity. Furthermore, they express concern that additional and dedicated manpower would be needed for feeding into and maintaining such a system.

Recommendation 19

CEB should set up an "inter-agency task force" to deal with the issue of fund-raising for extrabudgetary/non-core funding:

(a) Given that non-core funding has impacts on programme orientation and coherence, such an inter-agency task force would allow for a systematic exchange of information and proper planning and allow, wherever possible, for joint démarches, especially in favour of joint initiatives in programme implementation in the field. This would also give a positive signal to donors regarding the United Nations system's willingness to work together, increase transparency and diminish competition. The task force could help donor countries to establish consistent funding;

(b) United Nations organizations could use this mechanism to advocate for predictability and sustainability as well as for simplified and standardized donor reporting.

35. CEB members suggest a closer review of this recommendation. Members observe that while there might well be opportunities for joint donor appeals and donor conferences, and that past experience in this regard has been positive, questions arise as to whether establishing an inter-agency task force would be the right way to proceed. It is proposed that an initial step might instead be to examine in greater detail the lessons that can be drawn from current collaborative arrangements in approaching donors, some of which have worked relatively well (e.g., in respect of emergency operations and HIV/AIDS).

36. It is pointed out that extrabudgetary financing is increasingly linked to country-level activities and subject to donor/programme country partnership arrangements, and that it would be difficult to govern such a fluid system, based on comparative advantage, through a single centralized mechanism at the global level. Moreover, CEB members question whether establishing an inter-agency task force to exchange information and to send out joint requests for extrabudgetary/non-core funds at the global level would efficiently communicate the "positive signal to donors regarding the United Nations system's willingness to ... increase transparency and diminish competition", as the Joint Inspection Unit contends. They

believe that, instead, joint appeals for funding for an approved UNDAF at the country level would send a much stronger signal to donors and recipient Governments. Such an approach is therefore preferred to a global inter-agency task force.

37. CEB members further suggest that establishing a task force to deal with fund-raising for extrabudgetary funding may encounter political and practical obstacles. Joint activities in times of specific needs may therefore lend themselves more to such an approach than normal programming issues. It is moreover noted that UNDG could be the framework for this kind of inter-agency cooperation and that a similar mechanism already exists with the World Bank round tables organized to obtain pledges of donors for given developing countries, based on national needs plans.

Notes

[1] See A/60/125-E/2005/85, para. B.

[2] Ibid., para. E.

[3] Ibid., para. G.

[4] Ibid., para. 4.

[5] Ibid., para. 36.

[6] See A/60/125/Add.1-E/2005/85/Add.1, sects. II and III.

[7] Ibid., para. 85.

[8] See A/60/125/Add.1-E/2005/85/Add.1.